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Maintenance of International Security

Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/80 B of 12 December 1995, entitled "Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States". In that resolution the Assembly called upon all Balkan States to endeavour to promote good-neighbourly relations and continually to undertake unilateral and joint activities, particularly confidence-building measures as appropriate, in particular within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; emphasized the importance for all Balkan States to promote mutual cooperation in all fields; and urged the normalization of relations among all States of the Balkan region.

2. The General Assembly furthermore requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek the views of the Member States, particularly those from the Balkan region, and of international organizations, as well as competent organs of the United Nations, on the development of good-neighbourly relations in the region and on measures and preventive activities aimed at the creation of a stable zone of peace and cooperation in the Balkans by the year 2000, and to submit a report to the General Assembly at the fifty-second session.

3. In accordance with the above request, the Secretariat addressed on 8 May 1997, notes verbales requesting relevant information from Member States, international organizations and competent organs of the Organization. The replies received as of 8 August 1997 are reproduced in section II of the present report. Replies received subsequent to that date will appear in addenda to the present report.

4. On 26 June 1997, the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed a letter to the Secretary-General, drawing attention to the Thessaloniki Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of countries of south-eastern Europe, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997. The Declaration was circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council under the symbol A/52/217-S/1997/507 on 1 July 1997.

II. Replies received from Governments

France

[Original: French]

[22 July 1997]

1. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 50/80 B on the development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States, adopted by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on the initiative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which "requests the Secretary General to continue to seek the views of the Member States, particularly those from the Balkan region, and of international organizations, as well as of competent organs of the United Nations, on the development of good-neighbourly relations in the region and on measures and preventive activities aimed at the creation of a stable zone of peace and cooperation in the Balkans by the year 2000", France wishes to transmit the following views to the Secretary-General:

2. France is convinced that the development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States and their close involvement in cooperation arrangements on the European continent cannot but help to stabilize the region and bring it closer to the rest of Europe.

3. France notes with satisfaction that, in paragraph 3 of resolution 50/80 B, the General Assembly "calls upon all Balkan States to endeavour to promote good-neighbourly relations and continually to undertake unilateral and joint activities, particularly confidence-building measures as appropriate, in particular within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe" (OSCE).

4. The Royaumont process initiated by France in connection with the Peace Conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Paris in December 1995 is an important element in establishing stability and lasting good-neighbourly relations in south-eastern Europe. The Royaumont approach draws its inspiration from the Stability Pact in Europe adopted at Paris in March 1995. It is intended that this approach should be integrated into OSCE, the depositary of the Stability Pact, and should take the form of a regional forum for the strengthening of stability, good-neighbourliness and cooperation in south-eastern Europe at which all the States of the region would be represented on an equal footing.

5. The central element of this process is the need for a joint and ongoing effort. The avenues to be explored include the gradual improvement or restoration of dialogue and trust,

the prevention of tensions and crises, and the promotion of reconciliation, regional cooperation, economic reconstruction and good-neighbourliness. The process is a long-term one which supplements the arms control and security provisions included in the peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. In this regard, France welcomes the fact that periodic Balkan ministerial conferences were resumed in 1996. This forum, which was held most recently in Thessaloniki in June 1997, provides a channel that enables the countries most directly affected to respond to the Royaumont initiative.

Italy

[Original: English]

[1 July 1997]

1. From the start of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Italy has spared no effort in promoting a peaceful and lasting solution that would benefit the entire Balkan region, in the framework of the peace initiatives of the European Union. As a bilateral donor and through the European Union's assistance efforts, Italy has been among the main contributors in efforts to relieve the terrible suffering of the civilian population.

2. The Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina signed in Paris on 14 December 1995 and the Erdut agreement on Eastern Slavonia have created a true opportunity for stabilizing and rehabilitating the whole Balkan area. Signs of a return to normalcy have already emerged, such as elections in countries ravaged by war only a few months earlier. Steps have also been taken towards normalizing relations between these countries.

3. The peace agreements also provide mechanisms to control and reduce the level of armaments. Such provisions are fundamental to stability in the Balkans, where the level of armaments had increased tremendously in recent years. While considerable progress has been made towards implementing the two stabilization agreements reached under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a great deal remains to be done.

4. The future of Europe is inextricably linked to developments in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Political and economic stability in this area is essential to the stability and prosperity of the whole continent. This is the region where the stakes are highest in the attempt to forge a new European security.

5. In this context, Italy has preferred an integrated approach, as reflected in positive bilateral relations and in the forms of regional cooperation. The Central European Initiative, for example, has become an effective framework for regional cooperation in Europe today, with an area of collaboration that extends from the Adriatic to the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea.

6. In the context of broader cooperation in the European region, the political and economic reality of the Balkans requires the international community's solidarity and responsibility, for the Balkan region is an integral part of the new post-bipolar Europe.

7. In this perspective, Italy is shouldering its share of the responsibilities. It has made a strong, ongoing commitment to Bosnia and to fostering the transition to democracy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Italy has also taken the lead by sending the multinational protection force to Albania, in order to assist the country during this critical phase, and taken the initiative of coordinating international efforts for the economic and social rehabilitation of the country, which will shortly lead to a donor's conference. The Albanian situation, like the Bosnian conflict before it, demonstrates the need for the full involvement of OSCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and the Western European Union (WEU) in the global management of the Balkan crises. The foundations must be laid for a long-term security and integration process that will prevent local crises and assure long-term stability to the area. Europe must thus be fully involved in the Balkan region, to prevent it from remaining a source of instability on the threshold of the third millennium.

8. In working on these goals, we must not neglect respect for human rights and the rights of minorities, which continues to be a source of potential conflicts. Finally, the international community is ready and willing to assist countries in the region, particularly those most devastated by war, on the condition that their authorities demonstrate that they are willing to meet fully the obligations that they freely undersigned in the peace agreements.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

[Original: English]

[25 August 1997]

1.1 The specific experience in the development of the Republic of Macedonia has greatly influenced the character of the basic commitments and principles in its foreign policy: openness and readiness for cooperation and

development of good-neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries based on mutual respect and equal rights of all nations; respect for the inviolability of the existing international borders and territorial integrity of the States; political dialogue as a means for solving problems; respect for the human rights of persons belonging to national minorities in accordance with international law; integration in the European institutions and consistent observance of the established European standards in the relations among countries in the region, as defined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter for a New Europe, with firm determination and activities with a view towards the Balkans becoming not only geographically, but essentially an integral part of Europe.

1.2 In this respect, the Republic of Macedonia regards good-neighbourly relations among the Balkan countries as an essential precondition for preventing new crises and wars while the Europeanization of the Balkans and the securing of sustainable development should be in the interest not only of the Balkan countries, but of all the other European countries and of the international community as well. The entire Republic of Macedonia, as a concrete contribution to that end, initiated the adoption of resolutions at the forty-eighth (resolution 48/84 B), fiftieth (resolution 50/80 B) and fifty-first (resolution 51/55) sessions of the United Nations General Assembly which were sponsored by a large number of countries, including the States members of the European Union (EU).

1.3 Resolutions 48/84 B and 50/80 B on the development of good-neighbourly relations among the Balkan States, as texts of essential importance for the realization of the goal of creating a stable zone of peace and cooperation in the Balkans by the year 2000, outline the unilateral as well as the joint activities that the Balkan States should undertake in the field of security, particularly by developing confidence-building measures.

1.4 At the same time, in view of the interdependence of regional security and the development of regional economic cooperation and the democratic transformation of the region, in the above-mentioned resolutions, the Balkan States are called upon particularly to promote their cooperation in the field of trade, as well as their cooperation in the field of transport, telecommunications and environmental protection. They are also called upon to work on the promotion of the democratic processes, the observance of human rights and cultural cooperation as well as on the promotion of cooperation among themselves in other fields of their mutual relations. These aims shall be accomplished to a great extent with the involvement of the international organizations, especially of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the international financial organizations, as well as of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and EU, which in the forthcoming period shall represent conditions sine qua non for the successful democratic transformation of the region. Also, an exceptional contribution to that effect is expected to be made by the re-established dialogue among the Balkan States themselves, which, considering their commitments and efforts, is proving to be an ambitious and encouraging process.

1.5 The initiatives for the development of good-neighbourly relations in the wider region of south-eastern Europe, such as the Royaumont Initiative, and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), which were launched in the post-Dayton period, are of great importance and complementary to resolutions 48/84 B and 50/80 B. They should be seen as a part of the international effort to turn the Balkans into a zone of peace, stability and cooperation by the year 2000.

1.6 The Republic of Macedonia, aware of the importance of the regional component of arms control and disarmament, as well as of the confidence- and security-building measures, urges the commencement of negotiations which should result in a regional agreement on these issues. Such an agreement should rest upon the spirit and principles of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (the CFE Treaty) and the CFE-1A agreements, as well as on the OSCE 1992 and 1994 Vienna Documents. The Republic of Macedonia is willing to host such negotiations and be a depository State for that agreement.

1.7 Considering its own commitment to full integration in the European structures, and desirous of contributing to strengthening peace in the Balkans and cooperation among the States of the region, as well as to its substantial integration in Europe, while bearing in mind the political, economic and social conditions currently prevailing in it, the Republic of Macedonia is committed to cooperating, to the greatest possible extent, with its neighbours, as well as other States, in all fields. Consequently, it supports all initiatives that lead to strengthening peace, security and cooperation in the region and beyond, such as the Royaumont Initiative and SECI, the inter-Balkan process initiated by the Sofia Declaration of 1996, as well as the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The Republic of Macedonia makes a positive contribution in participating in all of these.

2.1 The Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in its previous information (A/50/412, paras. 57-75) submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/84 B,

proposed to the Secretary -General to undertake an initiative for "an Agenda on the Europeanization of the Balkans". The Secretary-General was expected to prepare a special report on the region, as a basis for a programme whose implementation could result in a "model for modern, European good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States". Before being considered and adopted/noted by the General Assembly, it could be discussed within a special forum, organized by the Secretary-General or by a Balkan State interested in hosting such a meeting; the presence of well-known experts in this field would be desirable. The Republic of Macedonia has indicated to the Secretary-General its willingness to hold such a forum in 1997.

2.2 In the period after the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/80 B, the Republic of Macedonia negotiated and concluded two very important agreements on good-neighbourly and friendly relations and cooperation, with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and with the Republic of Greece. Those agreements have decreased the risks of spilling over of the war in the southern Balkans and have had a positive effect on the overall situation in the region.

3.1 In the midst of such a volatile situation in the region, the forces of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), deployed along the northern and western borders, have played a very important positive role. The importance of their presence in the region has derived not so much from their military strength, but rather from the fact that they represented a symbol of the serious concern of the United Nations and its determination to prevent the spillover of the war. This concrete engagement in the realization of the basic provision of the Charter of the United Nations — strengthening and maintaining international peace and security — marked the beginning, and provided a powerful incentive for, the further development of preventive diplomacy. The regional importance of this successful United Nations peacekeeping mission became obvious during the crisis in the Republic of Albania, which still raises concerns. The success story of this preventive mission of the United Nations has been recognized by the international community.

3.2 In the period after the adoption of the resolution 50/80 B, certain results have been achieved in accordance with the requests contained in the resolution. With the assistance of the international community, that is to say, its most responsible elements, the halt in the war conflicts resulted in the signing of the Dayton Agreement. This Agreement, perhaps reached belatedly, nevertheless made the belligerents accept the norms of civilized behaviour. At the same time, the Agreement made it possible to put an end to the armed conflicts and gave the sides involved the chance to behave in accordance with the principles and aims of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It has established relations among the parties as equals and restored international political values and obligations in the whole region. The obligations under the Agreement are firm and must be fully observed. The future legitimacy of the parties involved will very much depend upon the implementation of the Agreement. The slow implementation of the provisions of the Agreement thus far could lend justification to the existing concerns.

3.3 With regard to the current situation in the Balkans, the efforts of several south-eastern European States, initiated by the 1996 Sofia Declaration, give rise to hope for improvement of the situation. At the most recent meeting, held at Thessaloniki on 9 to 10 June 1997, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs firmly committed themselves to strengthening stability and good-neighbourly relations in the region. They reaffirmed all the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. They also underlined their commitment to furthering the development of civil society, based on democratic foundations, as a constituent part of their overall social, economic and political development. The highest aim in their common belief is the human dimension of this joint initiative, which, as a continuing process, through comprehensive cooperation, should provide rapid economic development and prosperity to the peoples of the region. Liberalization of trade and joint infrastructure projects would enable the future interlinking and interdependence of production and consequently would bring people and their basic interests closer. This, in due course, will increase the commonality of production and commercial relations, and will bring together nations that have had diverging political attitudes and positions in their mutual relations. In accordance with the Thessaloniki Declaration, this is the only way to fulfil the conditions for joining the European Union, which is in the ultimate interests of the States of the region.

3.4 It should be underlined that at the Thessaloniki Conference the atmosphere was more relaxed than it had been in a long time. This was a result of the timely preparations and excellent organization of the Conference by the Government of Greece. The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia strove to give its utmost contribution to the successful completion of the work of the Conference. It is very important that the Balkan States, by that initiative, have become influential and credible actors for the development of mutual relations and the improvement of cooperation in the Balkan region. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the Conference considered the Royaumont and the South-east European Cooperative

initiatives to be complementary and supports close cooperation and coordination with the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic cooperation.

3.5 There is hope that all participants in the Conference will sincerely implement what they have declared. The Thessaloniki initiatives will be successful if they are pursued in the common interest of all the Balkan nations and in conditions of mutual respect and if local concerns and non-Balkan interests are avoided.

3.6 The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is against the establishment of any restricted regional associations among the Balkan States which are aimed at the development of the Balkan economic and political integration outside of the European Union. It considers that such efforts could isolate the Balkan countries from the European integration processes, which can have a negative impact on the societies and the Balkan peoples in the region.

3.7 If supported by the developed non-Balkan States, the Thessaloniki initiative could bring the region closer to the desired situation by the year 2000, that is, the goal of resolutions 48/84 B and 50/80 B, that the Balkans should become a zone of peace, security, good-neighbourliness and cooperation.

3.8 The Republic of Macedonia expects the General Assembly to call upon all States in the region, by their own efforts, to contribute to the achievement of the above-mentioned goal. In doing so, their major individual contribution could be if, in their mutual relations and while taking part in the various initiatives, they primarily concentrated on promoting and developing solutions for issues that are in their common interest. At the same time, we attach great importance to an appeal to the key donor countries to implement the assistance to the countries of the region, by which they will be contributing to the stability of each individual country as well as to that of the region as a whole.

3.9 A serious approach to the issue of the development of good-neighbourliness by the United Nations, taking into consideration the micro-specificity of the region, might lead towards the construction of a model to be offered as a basis for further consideration and application in other parts of the world as well.

4.1 The present economic and political situation in the Balkans is geared towards the transformation of the societies towards a market economy and towards systems based on parliamentary democracy. This will require greater sacrifices, but this should be seen as a process in which the societies will be based on sound foundations. By continuing those efforts and especially by mutual cooperation, the Balkan nations will, it is to be hoped, manage to emerge from the current *circulus vitiosus*. This new policy should be supported by the influential political and economic powers and elements.

4.2 The transition of the Balkan nations will be a difficult process which the Balkan nations will have to carry out by themselves. Their social and economic development will face a number of obstacles, the greatest one being the establishment of a new value system. It is important to continue the efforts to prevent new conflicts in the Balkans, to resolve the present ones, to assist the process of transition and to enter a period of development, democratization, respect of human rights and the rule of law.

4.3 The acceptance and observance of the aforementioned goals and values is a necessity for the further development of the Europeanization of the Balkans. The full integration of the Balkan nations in the European Union should be seen as a historic necessity which should be supported and not delayed. The observance of the European norms and standards will aid in the attainment of the basic interests and needs of all Balkan nations and will help their progress in the future.